

Censorship, oppression, and one-sided thoughts are characteristics of Communist China, not America, and certainly should not be the characteristics of America's great universities—to the contrary.

One of the most important ways to compete with and win against Communist China is to ensure that America—and, yes, our universities—remain what they have traditionally been: laboratories of free expression, free thought, creativity, innovation, and ingenuity.

My simple amendment will help make sure this happens, and I encourage all of my colleagues to vote yes to support this amendment, an America of free liberty, free thinking, and innovation.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to the vote on Sullivan amendment No. 1911.

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise today in opposition to amendment No. 1911. It is an amendment that claims to be about protecting free speech but that could actually have a very chilling effect on speech at our institutions of higher education.

I share the goal of fostering campus environments that protect free speech and the free exchange of ideas, but I have multiple concerns with the way this amendment goes about advancing those goals. It is not the role of the National Science Foundation or the inspector general of the National Science Foundation to police speech on campuses.

Deciding what is appropriate regulation of speech should not be left to agencies that are not experts in constitutional analysis or in issues related to First Amendment protections at our institutions of higher education.

I believe it would be a mistake to use today's amendment to make substantial change without the opportunity for input from students, educators, and stakeholders. I have heard from many institutions of higher education, as well as civil rights groups, who strongly share my concerns.

I urge my colleagues to vote no.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, with all due respect to my colleague from Washington, when the universities say they can't do this because it is too burdensome, again, to me that actually demonstrates the very problem my simple amendment is trying to resolve.

All it is saying is in exchange for the tens of billions of dollars that Amer-

ica's universities will be getting as part of the Endless Frontier Act, they have to do one simple thing: once a year, send a letter to the National Science Foundation saying—and this is in the amendment right here—they have committed to protecting free speech, viewpoint diversity, the free exchange of ideas, academic freedom, and the protection of religious liberty, and prohibiting against discrimination.

That is it, Mr. President. It is very simple. This is what universities should be doing. It is a letter, once a year, that is very simple in exchange for billions and billions of Federal research dollars. I certainly hope all of my colleagues will support this amendment—simple, needed.

Again, this is how we outcompete communist China, which is all about what the Endless Frontier Act is focused on.

I encourage my colleagues to vote yes.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 1911

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

Mr. SULLIVAN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 49, nays 51, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 207 Leg.]

YEAS—49

Barrasso	Grassley	Risch
Blackburn	Hagerty	Romney
Boozman	Hawley	Rounds
Braun	Hoeben	Rubio
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Capito	Inhofe	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Collins	Kennedy	Shelby
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Cramer	Lummis	Tillis
Crapo	Marshall	Toomey
Cruz	McConnell	Tuberville
Daines	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Murkowski	Young
Fischer	Paul	
Graham	Portman	

NAYS—51

Baldwin	Heinrich	Peters
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Reed
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rosen
Blunt	Kaine	Sanders
Booker	Kelly	Schatz
Brown	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cardin	Leahy	Sinema
Carper	Lujan	Smith
Casey	Manchin	Stabenow
Coons	Markey	Tester
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Feinstein	Murray	Warren
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Hassan	Padilla	Wyden

The amendment (No. 1911) was rejected.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:03 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. ROSEN).

bled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. ROSEN).

ENDLESS FRONTIER ACT—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

NATIONAL PERSONNEL RECORDS CENTER

Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, I rise today kind of expressing the frustration of many of my constituents. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have had Federal Agencies and employees not working at all—not from home, not in the office, period. Have not had a lick of work for over 14 months.

In April, the Senate Finance Committee had a hearing entitled “The Social Security Administration During COVID: How the Pandemic Hampered Access to Benefits and Strategies for Improving Service Delivery.”

Now, following the hearing and in response to my concerns that seniors in my State with issues getting their Social Security benefits are not being sufficiently served due to field and local offices being closed, my office got a letter from Commissioner Andrew Saul. The letter states:

I urge you to encourage the unions to continue engaging in meaningful dialogue with management that includes a focus on the very best service to the public.

That is a nice way of saying: We need help getting the unions to the table so we can get Federal employees back to work.

Now, we are talking about mandatory services, reopening Social Security offices for in-person visits in a postvaccine world to assist elderly Americans—my grandparents, your grandparents—having issues with their benefits. This isn't happening because government employees are not showing up.

It brings to mind an old quote from an old Governor in Louisiana, Earl Long. They asked Governor Long: How many people do you have working at the capitol? And he looks off into space, and he goes: Working? About two.

Now, in this case, that is the way it is going with this. The situation at the Department of Veterans Affairs, in connection with the National Archives and specifically the National Personnel Records Center, is even worse. According to the National Archives, the backlog of veterans' records grew to more than 499,000 requests in April of 2021. They estimate it will take 18 to 24 months to clear once the National Personnel Records Center is staffed at full capacity.

I just want to make this point. We have 499,000 ignored document requests from veterans. The people who have served our country are not being served in their current life.

Despite the widespread availability of vaccines and the recent relaxation of COVID-19 guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Personnel Records

Center only moved to phase 2 on March 29, 2021. In phase 2, the National Personnel Records Center has 25 percent of staff onsite. There are supposedly 200 employees per shift, 2 shifts a day, 6 days a week, but they are only processing emergency requests—for example, immediate burials, hospitalizations, and for the homeless.

In the Veterans' Affairs Committee, we led a push to enable National Personnel Records Center employees to get vaccines from the VA's allotment in an attempt to increase staffing. In the latest information provided to my staff, only 36 National Personnel Records Center employees took advantage of this availability. This is 36 out of 600.

Now, these aren't just numbers on a poster. There are real consequences. These are people's lives.

My constituent Mr. Albert Duplantis, 69 years old, of Lake Charles, LA—there is Mr. Duplantis when he was in the Navy, and there you see him now. He served our country during Vietnam stationed on the USS Pyro.

He has diabetes mellitus type II, atrial fibrillation, and hypertension—claimed as due to Agent Orange. He needs treatment for his heart condition, but he cannot get the medical records he needs because the National Personnel Records Center is not processing the needed military record during COVID-19, the one that the VA needs to make this happen.

Now, his application for medical treatment for his heart condition—this is a heart condition, by the way—was received by the VA in December 2019. That is 2019. In an early response, the VA provided a possible date of completion of March 23, 2021. Now, from 2019, December, to March 23, 2021, that date has come and gone, but Mr. Duplantis's application is stuck in limbo until the VA receives his military records from the National Personnel Records Center.

Let me repeat. A treatment for heart disease has been held up since 2019 because of the inaction of the National Personnel Records Center. We are over 1 year into the pandemic. We have had access to vaccines, the masks are off, and still records are not being processed. And Federal employees are sitting at home, collecting a paycheck, without working. We are talking since March of last year. We are now in May of this year. They have not shown up for work 1 day, nor have they worked from home, and we have a man who can't get his records for heart disease.

This is unacceptable. With vaccines widely available, there is no excuse for mandatory work not being done. If you are not willing to do your job, you shouldn't have a job. This great American went to war for our freedom, but Federal employees won't go to the office to file his paperwork. There are other veterans besides Mr. Duplantis unable to receive medical treatment and other benefits they are entitled to.

This weekend we will observe Memorial Day, a time where we honor and

mourn the men and women of the U.S. military who died during their service to this great country. This is a reminder of the sacrifice willingly risked—and unfortunately it occurred—and they did this, they signed up for this, without flinching. We should repay our veterans and do more for them just by doing the job that should be done.

The National Personnel Records Center needs to get their house in order. They need to go back to work. Our veterans deserve better. Mr. Duplantis deserves medical treatment.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I rise at this moment to oppose the amendment that is going to be offered by my colleague and friend from Louisiana Senator KENNEDY. This amendment would endanger the lives of thousands, if not millions, of innocent people and prolong this terrible coronavirus pandemic. I am sure that is not the intention of the Senator from Louisiana, but that is what his effort would do. His amendment would gut a critical tool to help stop the spread of the pandemic globally, as well as stem the economic fallout that would hurt us here in America.

The International Monetary Fund has a fund with the ability to release money in what are called Special Drawing Rights, foreign exchange reserve assets that it maintains. This can be exchanged by member nations for hard currency in times of crisis. This is exactly what was done in 2009 amid the global economic crisis and what is being considered now amid the pandemic and related economic downturn.

The amendment, which I am going to offer, has the support of American business, labor, and global health, and poverty groups—for good reason. The Special Drawing Rights are a no cost way for Americans to help poor nations buy the vaccines they need to save lives and to stop the spread of this coronavirus. And it would also help aid in economic recovery.

Isn't that exactly what we should be doing at this moment?

This pandemic doesn't know any boundaries. This virus doesn't pick and choose good nations and bad nations. Our ability to protect the hard-fought gains against the pandemic here in the United States, after all that we have been through, ultimately depends on getting it under control around the world so variants and strains don't attack us anew.

I know what we have been through. If we ignore the reality, the fact is, this pandemic came roaring at us from a city in China that most Americans have never heard of, and now we have to decide whether we are going to take it on directly.

You don't tell the fire department to not help with the fire at your neighbor's house at a time of crisis. Sadly, that is exactly what the Kennedy amendment would do.

And the one part that he is missing that is so critical is to take it or leave it on the Special Drawing Rights. You can't pick and choose the Nations that might or might not receive the benefits to buy vaccines.

We can use other mechanisms and persuasion to achieve that goal, but I am sorry to say that Senator KENNEDY's approach would cut off the Special Drawing Rights for friendly nations as well as those who are not friendly. And that to me is shortsighted.

The way the IMF Special Drawing Rights process works, we cannot dictate which countries will receive the benefits. Because of our majority position at the IMF, we either stop the Special Drawing Rights completely or let them go forward.

So the United States should stand for public health, stand for people to be spared the suffering and death of this coronavirus, and move forward with humanitarian aid that will help the world.

The Treasury Department is working with our allies to halt the ability of any rogue nation that might want to exchange Special Drawing Rights for hard currency and pushing transparency measures for how any Special Drawing Rights are spent.

As such, I am offering a substitute amendment that makes it clear that we want to make certain that nations do not misuse these funds. But unlike the Kennedy amendment, it would move forward and provide resources for countries desperately in need of vaccines to save lives.

I further support the Treasury's efforts to make sure that the SDR allocation is used to help to stem the pandemic.

I urge my colleagues to vote for my substitute amendment and to oppose the amendment being offered by the Senator from Louisiana.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to the vote in relation to Durbin amendment No. 2014.

The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I love Senator DURBIN. I hate his amendment. Here is why. These SDRs are not free money. They are not free money. They are like a cryptocoin. The IMF issues the cryptocoin to all the countries that are members of the IMF, and these countries take that cryptocoin, and guess what they do. They come to the United States of America and say: We want to exchange our cryptocoin for dollars. And guess what. We don't have the dollars because we are dead broke. So we have to borrow the dollars to give to the Chinas and the Venezuelas and all the countries that hate us in exchange for their cryptocurrencies.

Now, that is just a natural fact, and if you check the record, you will find that as to the countries that really need the money to vaccinate their people, about 10 percent of this money is

going to them. The rest is going to all the larger countries, like China, like Venezuela, like the countries in Europe. Virtually no money gets sent to the people who need it. This is an incredibly inefficient way to do it.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, do I have 1 minute?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Right.

Mr. DURBIN. These Special Drawing Rights of the International Monetary Fund are the only way the poorest nations on Earth could have the money to buy vaccines to save their people. That is what it boils down to.

But Senator KENNEDY says: Well, some of this money might get into the wrong hands.

I pray that it doesn't. I pray that they administer it properly, and I think they will. But how would you like to have on your conscience the fact that our amendment vote on the Senate floor is the end of the funds for vaccines for some of the poorest countries on Earth? I would not want that on my conscience.

Support my amendment, which makes it clear where the Americans do stand when it comes to this issue.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 2014

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

Mr. DURBIN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 50, nays 50, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 208 Leg.]

YEAS—50

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Reed
Bennet	Hirono	Rosen
Blumenthal	Kaine	Sanders
Booker	Kelly	Schatz
Brown	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cardin	Leahy	Sinema
Carper	Lujan	Smith
Casey	Manchin	Stabenow
Coons	Markey	Tester
Cortez Masto	Menendez	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Murphy	Warnock
Feinstein	Murray	Warren
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Hassan	Padilla	Wyden
Heinrich	Peters	

NAYS—50

Barrasso	Graham	Portman
Blackburn	Grassley	Risch
Blunt	Hagerty	Romney
Boozman	Hawley	Rounds
Braun	Hoeven	Rubio
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Capito	Inhofe	Scott (FL)
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (SC)
Collins	Kennedy	Shelby
Cornyn	Lankford	Sullivan
Cotton	Lee	Thune
Cramer	Lummis	Tillis
Crapo	Marshall	Toomey
Cruz	McConnell	Tuberville
Daines	Moran	Wicker
Ernst	Murkowski	Young
Fischer	Paul	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). On this vote, the yeas are 50, the nays are 50.

Under the previous order requiring 60 votes for the adoption of this amendment, the amendment is not agreed to.

The amendment (No. 2014) was rejected.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 1710

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to the vote in relation to Kennedy amendment No. 1710.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, the International Monetary Fund issues special drawing rights. A special drawing right is like a cryptocoin—it is not worth anything. It is only worth something if you exchange it for real money. The Biden administration decided to encourage the IMF to issue all of these cryptocurrencies, and guess what they are all doing? They are bringing the cryptocurrencies to the United States of America and are saying: We want dollars. Give me dollars for the cryptocoin.

Yet we don't have any dollars in our checking account, so we have to borrow the money. There is no free lunch, and you don't get one now.

All my bill would do would be to say that we are not going to issue special drawing rights to perpetrators of genocide or state sponsors of terrorism—in other words, no free money to China, no free money to Syria, and no free money to Iran. It is ludicrous for us to be borrowing money to give dollars to exchange for cryptocurrencies to China or Syria or Iran.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, there is one fundamental flaw in what you have just heard from Senator KENNEDY, and let me read it to you:

The United States retains the right to refuse to purchase special drawing rights from any [country].

It is voluntary—it is up to us to do it—and we don't purchase them from a lot of countries because of that.

Let me tell you further that all we can do is stop the special drawing rights which are providing our currency to countries to buy vaccines. Why do we care whether some country far away had a vaccine? Well, how far away was Wuhan, China?

We have to be in this together to try to put an end to this pandemic crisis. Vote to defeat the Kennedy amendment.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 1710

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 49, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 209 Leg.]

YEAS—51

Barrasso	Graham	Paul
Blackburn	Grassley	Portman
Blunt	Hagerty	Risch
Boozman	Hawley	Romney
Braun	Hoeven	Rounds
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Capito	Inhofe	Sasse
Cassidy	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Collins	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cornyn	Lankford	Shelby
Cotton	Lee	Sullivan
Cramer	Lummis	Thune
Crapo	Manchin	Tillis
Cruz	Marshall	Toomey
Daines	McConnell	Tuberville
Ernst	Moran	Wicker
Fischer	Murkowski	Young

NAYS—49

Baldwin	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Bennet	Hirono	Sanders
Blumenthal	Kaine	Schatz
Booker	Kelly	Schumer
Brown	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Sinema
Cardin	Leahy	Smith
Carper	Lujan	Stabenow
Casey	Markey	Tester
Coons	Menendez	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warner
Duckworth	Murphy	Warnock
Durbin	Murray	Warren
Feinstein	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Padilla	Wyden
Hassan	Peters	
Heinrich	Reed	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 49.

Under the previous order requiring 60 votes for the adoption of this amendment, the amendment is not agreed to.

The amendment (No. 1710) was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The junior Senator from Louisiana.

REMEMBERING CHARLES E. ROEMER III

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I want to just spend a few minutes today saying goodbye to a friend. Louisiana weeps right now. Gov. Charles E. Roemer III passed away last week. He went by "Buddy." He served our State from 1988 to 1992. Before that, he served a number of terms in Congress.

I guess I am biased because Buddy brought me to the dance, if you will. I was sitting in my office in New Orleans practicing law, earning a good living, you know, thinking about happy hour on a Friday afternoon, and Governor Roemer had just been elected and he asked me to come up to Baton Rouge and work as his legal counsel. And I did, and I stayed for 4 years. And I liked government service, and I have been in it, off and on, since then.

Buddy was one of the—Buddy was an extremely—I say "was." I am going to say "is" because he lives with us. But he was one of the most and is one of the most complex, interesting people I have ever met. He was immeasurably talented. He was raised on a cotton farm, but it wasn't really a farm because his parents and his family, they were all so accomplished.

They put together a cotton farm with their own sweat and blood and some free enterprise capital of about 10,000 acres in North Louisiana. It is a big farm in Louisiana. But the kids all worked, including Buddy.

They didn't have a television. Mr. Budgie, his dad, and Ms. Adeline, his

mom, would require the kids, in their free time, to read books. And, boy, it stuck with Buddy. I never saw him without a book. I would ride with him to go to a speech. He would have a book in the car, and he would read it driving over there.

He went to Harvard when he was 16. He would have gone sooner. Harvard offered him a position, but his mom and dad said: You are too young. You have got to stick around.

And he stayed at Harvard for graduate school.

Buddy was—how can I put this?—one of the first real intellectual Governors that we ever had in Louisiana. I am not putting down our other Governors, now—I am not—because all of our Governors have been intelligent, just like in the Presiding Officer's State. You don't rise to that position without being intelligent. But Buddy truly believed in the power of ideas, and he truly believed in the worth of education.

I have used his words often. He used to say: Kennedy, the future in Louisiana is education. It is not the price of oil. It is not the unemployment rate. It is not who the Governor is. It is education.

And he would say that time and again.

During his 4 years—when he became Governor, we had a \$7 billion budget. We had a \$1 billion deficit. That is what he was left with. Roemer balanced the budget. It wasn't easy, but he did. And then he implemented fiscal reforms that dramatically and totally changed our way of budgeting in Louisiana for generations to come, because of Buddy's efforts.

He announced in Louisiana—and this was heresy at the time: I am going to find out which of our teachers can teach, and, by God, I am going to pay them.

And he said: But I am also going to find out which of our teachers can't teach, and I am going to either teach them how or tell them to find a new line of work.

Boy, was that ever revolutionary. And he did it.

He totally rewrote our campaign finance laws. When Buddy became Governor, there was no reporting of campaign money. If you were running for office, somebody could bring you a suitcase full of cash—\$200,000—and it was perfectly legal. You didn't have to report it. And if you got the money on a Thursday, if you decided on a Friday you weren't going to run and you withdrew from the race, you could keep it. You could keep it.

Buddy completely rewrote all of that. Now you have to report every penny in, every penny out. There is a cap on contributions. No cash. And we enforce it. It changed our politics dramatically.

I will tell you one quick story that epitomizes the Buddy I knew.

There was a central piece of his education program. I won't bore you with the details. It had to do with higher

education. It was key to our future, and we really needed to pass it.

I was handling it, lobbying it for the Governor, and we needed one more vote in the senate—one more vote to pass this landmark bill. And this one Senator said: Kennedy, I will vote for it if you will have the Governor give me this project.

So I was all excited. I went back to see the Governor. I said: Governor, I think I got it put together.

It was a road project.

He said: Call him over to our department of transportation and see what they think.

And the folks at the department of transportation said: Yes, we can do it, but if we do it, we will all go to jail.

So I said: Oh, man.

So I go back, and I tell Governor Roemer. I was young, but I was passionate, and I said: Governor, we can't do it.

He said: I agree. We are not going to do that.

I said: But listen. This is so important. This particular Senator lies to us all the time. Let me just lie to him. Let me just go to him and tell him we will do it. We will get his vote, and then I will go back to him later and say we changed our mind.

The end does justify the means. I will never forget it.

Buddy says: No, we are not doing that.

And I argued with him, but he finally just said: Look, Kennedy, I made my decision. We are not doing it that way.

I am going to really miss Buddy. He wasn't a perfect guy. I told him one time—I said: Governor, if I were back in law practice in the private sector and you came to me as a private client, I would represent you, but I would quadruple my hourly rate.

He was so smart, but he could be very opinionated. Tip O'Neill gave Buddy sort of his slogan phrase. Tip O'Neill described then-Congressman Roemer one time. He said: Congressman Roemer—often wrong, never in doubt.

But I am going to really miss Buddy. All he ever wanted to do was change Louisiana, and he did. He wasn't re-elected, but he did.

But Buddy always understood. This was his barometer of success. He used to tell me and say: Kennedy, here is how you know when you are doing a good job: if you are making the right people mad.

He used to say: If nobody is mad at you and if the wrong people like what you are doing, you are not doing your job.

So he did make people mad, and it cost him his reelection. But he changed Louisiana, and Louisiana weeps. And when I count my blessings, I count Buddy Roemer twice.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. LUMMIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

FINANCIAL INNOVATION CAUCUS

Ms. LUMMIS. Mr. President, I am excited to announce the founding of the Senate Financial Innovation Caucus with my friend and cochair, the Senator from Arizona. I am delighted that you also have joined our caucus. We are grateful for your participation and look forward to working with you.

One of my top priorities and a legacy I hope to leave in this Chamber is to ensure the United States remains a global leader in financial services for future generations.

The U.S. dollar is the world's unquestioned reserve currency. Since the Second World War, this leadership role has given our country enormous advantages, including affordable credit and trade finance. China is not hiding its ambition to knock the U.S. dollar down a peg by offering a competitor payment system that sidesteps the United States.

This year, the Chinese Government launched a pilot program for their digital yuan in multiple cities around China. They expect to completely release the central bank digital currency at the 2022 Winter Olympics.

A video released by China state-controlled media in December of 2020 openly stated that the digital yuan will allow China to "actively participate in reforming world economic governance" and is "one of the building blocks of China's move toward world market status and greater involvement in setting the framework of the global economy."

China does not share the same values as our country relating to fair competition. This chilling reality is one of the many reasons the United States must advance financial innovation and do so now. China is serious about the future. Chinese President Xi stated in 2018 that financial innovation is "the new industrial revolution."

In another part of the world, digital assets are protecting many Venezuelans during their current economic crisis and ensuring corrupt government officials cannot seize or devalue their hard-earned savings. The U.S. Government is also using digital assets to achieve its foreign policy objectives and to provide humanitarian aid to Venezuelan groups faster than traditional channels.

We must work hard today to ensure the next generation of Americans can enjoy the opportunity and prosperity made possible by responsible innovation. Failure to do so could have astronomical impacts on the freedoms and privileges that are essential to the American dream.

I have been encouraged by early signs from the Biden administration that they understand the existential threat of China and the promise of financial innovation. China's moves alone should create a sense of urgency in this Chamber to take action.

But it is not just a threat from China that should motivate us. In addition to

protecting the U.S. position as the world leader in the financial system, proper regulations for financial innovation will have lasting effects in the financial industry in several ways, notably financial inclusion and entrepreneurship because financial innovation encompasses topics as diverse as faster payment and equities settlement, central bank digital currencies, financial inclusion, digital assets, distributed ledger technology, consumer protection, artificial intelligence, and machine learning. This area has remained bipartisan, following in the tradition of many other financial service issues.

The Financial Innovation Caucus is rigorously committed to the tradition of bipartisanship and will create a lasting legacy by doing so. Innovation is core to the American identity, and innovation isn't confined to one party. Our job here is to create a framework that allows innovation to take root. Regulatory certainty fosters entrepreneurial innovation. A lack of regulatory clarity, on the flip side, strangles regulation, restrains entrepreneurship.

In many cases, financial innovators are simply hungry to know the rules of the road and how they fit into existing law. We need a right-sized regulatory framework for financial technology that both enables new market opportunities and emphasizes consumer protection. The innovator too often loses when competing against business giants with lobbying arms. Together, we can craft regulations that foster innovation, not stifle or unnecessarily direct it.

We also need a new consumer protection framework for emerging tech, which promotes access and innovation but ensures appropriate guardrails are in place.

Innovators are the lifeblood of America. Each new idea strengthens our future. Innovators have done hard work in coming up with ideas which will bring underserved populations into the financial system, reduce systemic risk, and strengthen our competitive nature on the global stage.

Yet there is only so much innovators can accomplish due to our maze of financial regulations. American innovators need clear rules of the road so they can responsibly turn innovation into reality. It is our obligation as government officials to create a framework that clearly enables responsible innovation rather than stifling it. We must do a great deal more in the coming years to clarify and modernize our financial laws.

Citibank, Goldman Sachs, Avanti Bank and Trust, State Street, Deutsche Bank, Kraken, and other large financial institutions are now doing much more than dipping their toes into this realm. They are diving into the financial technology and digital asset markets. Financial innovation is here to stay. Younger generations are turning to and prioritizing technology for their investments.

In February, CNBC reported that there may be as many as 100,000 millionaires from the appreciation of digital assets like Bitcoin. These technologies, if harnessed wisely, see no color, no creed, and no sex.

But financial innovation is not limited to regulating digital assets. This caucus will also focus on issues like faster payments, including a U.S. central bank digital currency and FedNow, which have real potential to allow all Americans to receive their paychecks instantly.

The lack of real-time payments costs disadvantaged Americans millions in overdraft fees each year and would reduce many Americans' reliance on high-interest loans. It also traps large amounts of capital for companies, which could be deployed more productively. Tackling these issues will help bring millions of unbanked or underbanked Americans into our financial system.

In Wyoming, we live by the doctrine that you have to pull yourself up by your bootstraps. What you earn is a direct result of your hard work. All Americans should have access to their hard-earned money and investments whenever they would like. We can and should use innovation technologies to reduce settlement times in our payment networks and capital markets and to reduce systemic risk and improve transparency.

Threats to the world economic system, coupled with the benefits financial innovation can create, is why, today, alongside many of my colleagues from both parties, we are founding the Senate Financial Innovation Caucus. The caucus is a bipartisan group committed to promoting responsible innovation to help the U.S. financial industry truly meet 21st century challenges of a globally interconnected economy and to harvest technology to make markets more inclusive, vibrant, and safe for all Americans. After all, our financial innovation is critical in our pursuit to ensure equal access to financial institutions and opportunities.

It is my hope that the work done by the Financial Innovation Caucus will deliver comprehensive legislation to clarify, regulate, and protect America's edge in the financial industry when it comes to innovation. We live in a digital world. Technology is now engrained in our everyday lives. Our lives should reflect this shift and should not hinder innovation. Only together can we secure the U.S. role in the future of finance. So let's go to work.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

S. 1260

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, the United States is at a crossroads in our strategy to counter the threat posed by Communist China. It is vital that we place ourselves in a position to compete with China, to be sure, but it is equally important that we consider

just what kind of game we are playing and just what kind of competitor we aspire to be.

The bill before us, the Endless Frontier Act, aims to counter China primarily by boosting technology research and development. No doubt, these are important components of any strategy to counter China, but, unfortunately, it goes about it in the exact wrong way—trying to beat China at its own game and taking us across a frontier that we ought never to traverse. In fact, models of some of China's own bad strategies are emulated in this legislation, strategies that are in exact opposition—direct opposition—to American principles and American ways of life.

Let's consider some of the hallmarks of communist China. In every aspect, the Chinese regime grows and centralizes the power of government at the expense of free citizens and free markets—an experiment that has expanded into dangerous and even deadly territory. Take, for example, China's record on human rights.

China has gone so far as to enslave and subject the Tibetan and Uighur people to forced labor, reeducation, and torture. Under China's infamous one-child policy, it has brutally and barbarically forced families to undergo IUD implantation, complete sterilization, and abortion.

It has a long, dark history of religious persecution and of silencing dissidents. Under President Xi Jinping, Chinese authorities have detained millions of Muslims and arrested thousands of Christians. They have seized control of Tibetan monasteries and closed or demolished dozens of Buddhist and Taoist temples. They have even practiced forced organ harvesting of members of the Falun Gong religion.

Or consider China's actions in the realm of foreign policy.

In true imperialist form, China is pushing its Belt and Road Initiative—a massive, predatory infrastructure project that stretches from East Asia to Europe—designed to massively expand China's coercive economic and political influence. It has spread Confucius Institutes across American college campuses, entangling American universities with Chinese state policies and turning them into megaphones to repeat Chinese propaganda. In multilateral organizations, China continuously undermines longstanding democratic norms, instituting policies that, instead, benefit the Chinese Communist Party's authoritarian values, and it has held a tight, cronyist, command-and-control grip over its economy—heavily subsidizing industries and constantly picking winners and losers.

While China has picked up some steam through some of these actions, we cannot ignore that whatever momentum it may have acquired is of dubious success and minimal sustainability in the long run. You see, China, under the control of the Communist Party, has, in reality, one of the least

efficient economies in the entire world. In terms of GDP per capita, it is quite the opposite of being at the top of the barrel. In fact, it is way down, right next to Cuba and Kazakhstan.

It turns out that political corruption and state-owned enterprises come with some financial dead weight too. The financial cost alone of enslaving, sterilizing, and brainwashing 12.8 million Uighurs and other oppressed groups is steep, even as the human cost of this moral depravity is far worse and infinitely steeper.

Killing future generations' potential through abortion is also as foolish as it is inhumane. As a result of its decades-long abortion and one-child or two-child policies, China is on track to lose a third of its workforce and age faster than any society in history. The ratio of workers to retirees in China, which is currently 8 to 1, is projected to whittle down to 2 to 1 in the coming decades. With only two employees for every retiree, China's pension system, which is already showing signs of buckling, will inevitably crack under pressure.

It is true that China is aggressive, and it is true that China is really big, but it is not ironclad in its position of global strength, to put it mildly. As its population ages more and more and as more of its land falls into wasted, polluted squalor, it will have neither the inhabitants nor the resources to continue on its current course of perceived economic prosperity.

There is nothing about China's principles or about China's trajectory that we should try to emulate, not in the least. In nearly every way imaginable, the Chinese regime consolidates power to trample the rights of individual men and women and quash free expression, the free exercise of religion, and free enterprise. Nothing could be more antithetical to the American system of government and the American way of life. In fact, it is precisely the opposite formula that has made us the world's strongest and most prosperous nation.

The Founders gave us a Constitution precisely for the purpose of dispersing and limiting power within the Federal Government and to keep government, in general, as close and accountable to the people as possible. And they gave us a Bill of Rights precisely to safeguard individual liberty and protect our most cherished freedoms—empowering ordinary men and women to preach and live out their deepest beliefs in the public square, to gather and speak freely, to bear arms, and to petition the government in redress of grievances.

You see, the beauty of this design is that it opens up the space for two separate but mutually reinforcing institutions that are at the heart of our vision of freedom and that are absolutely key to our success: a free enterprise economy and a voluntary civil society.

These systems work in tandem for everyone because they impel everyone to work together—harnessing individ-

uals' self-interests to the common good of the community and, ultimately, that of the Nation. It is the free market system that prizes human ingenuity, rewarding people for putting their God-given talents and their own exertions and resources in the service of their neighbors.

The free market impels us to ask: What problems need to be solved? What can I do to improve other people's lives?

It is the free market that created the wealth that liberated millions of American families from subsistence farming, opening up opportunities for the pursuit of happiness never known before or since in government-directed economies. These are blessings that never will be known in an economy dominated by a government.

In America, it has also always been understood that the family is the building block of society, worthy of protecting and of empowering, and it has been the cooperation between families, churches, neighborhoods, clubs, and voluntary associations that have knit together the American social fabric and made it strong.

In other words, the beauty of the American system is that of opening up the space for everyday citizens to build creative, productive, meaningful, and happy lives together. These are the hallmarks of the American system of government, and these are the things that we ought to preserve in moving forward.

Unfortunately, the bill before us attempts not to double down on our successes but to pivot to the so-called "successes" of China by federally hijacking research and development and crowding out the private incentives that bring successful ideas to market. It is a flawed and, ultimately, foolish strategy.

First, in our free and democratic society, we will never marshal the will to ramp up taxes and spend China into the ground, nor should we try.

Second, history has proven, time and again, that centralized planning is a losing game. The United States has already tried the industrial policy experiment of picking winners and losers and causing great harm in the process. In fact, that is exactly how we have ended up with the terrible protectionist policies like trade wars and the Jones Act.

The strategy of the Endless Frontier Act, however, is rooted in the mistaken belief that our markets have failed us and that the only means by which we can jump-start our economy and create innovation is by trusting in Federal Government bureaucrats.

So what would it do in reality?

It would green-light \$54 billion in spending beyond our budget caps, with additional authorizations of \$190 billion, and it would put this massive amount of money toward more government bureaucracy, producing a system where the government picks winners and losers in industry, creating artifi-

cial demand for inefficient technologies, crowding out the good research and development that the private sector already does, and increasing our manufacturing costs.

If we are to compete with China and maintain our leadership in technology, what, instead, should be our path forward? What should we do instead of passing this law that tries to compete with China by using strategies that work only for China and will never work here and must never work here?

We have to do what America does and always has done best. Instead of chilling innovation and competition, we ought to decentralize power and champion trust in the private sector. We ought to decrease regulation, not invest in regulatory bodies. We ought to simplify and cut taxes, not offshore our jobs. We ought to use our critical minerals, not let them languish. We ought to partner with our allies, not restrict fair trade. We ought to harvest timber, not organs. We ought to defend families, not diminish them. We ought to encourage entrepreneurship, not crony capitalism. We ought to strengthen markets, not government.

Two paths lie before us. I urge my colleagues to choose the better part and reject this bill.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, thank you very much. I wanted to rise today to talk about a matter that has come before the Senate in the bill that we are considering, the United States Innovation and Competition Act. I rise to talk about a particular amendment that I have been working on. It is amendment No. 1853. Of course I urge the Senate to act quickly to approve this amendment to protect our supply chains that are critical to the national security of the United States.

I wanted to explain what the origin of this amendment has been. It goes all the way back to the beginning of the pandemic, the worst public health crisis in over 100 years in our Nation. At that time, as so many Americans remember, we watched in horror as access to masks, gloves, gowns, and even more sophisticated equipment, like ventilators and other critical supplies—when all of that was necessary for pandemic response, all of a sudden, it dried up.

The reason why we had such a shortage of supplies and personal protective equipment and the like was that supply chains were delayed, and those supply chains, of course, were originating in China, which we know is a country where the government is run by the Chinese Communist Party. That same ruling party and that government even tightened restrictions on the exports of masks and other personal protective equipment.

So we learned the hard way, the very hard way, just how dependent our supply chains are on goods originating in China. We learned how vulnerable we

all are, our Nation was and is, to the Chinese Government's whims, really the whim of the Communist Party in China, because it is a fact that they control the companies that produce and export the critical supplies we depend upon.

This amendment, amendment 1853, which, by the way, is bipartisan in ways that you don't see very much of in the Senate these days—three Democrats and three Republicans coming together on this bipartisan amendment. It is an effort to enhance our national security at its core. That is what it is about, enhancing our national security, but unfortunately corporate forces are blocking it. They are even blocking a vote on it. They don't, apparently, want to see a vote on this bill, and they also don't want to include it in an agreement between both sides when the bill is about to be completed in a so-called managers' package as part of the bill.

We just want to get it done because I am interested in and my five cosponsors from both parties are interested in protecting U.S. national security.

What we read today in a publication, *POLITICO Pro*, the morning trade edition—I am just holding up a copy of it here, and I will just make reference to it. I don't think we have to add all of it to the *RECORD*, but here is the lead for *POLITICO Pro* this morning. The lead says this:

Trade groups representing some of the country's largest corporations are staunchly opposing a Senate proposal that would subject U.S. companies to a Federal review before they can make certain investments in China or relocate critical manufacturing capabilities there.

And then in the body of the report, when it gets down to reporting in detail who is opposing this amendment and what they are saying, it says that this amendment has "riled up big business."

"Riled up big business." Just imagine that. Big corporations riled up because a bipartisan group of Senators is coming together to protect national security, and they are riled up. They don't seem to support us in this.

Here is what one of the organizations that would go on the record—of course, you have a lot of big corporations that are hiding behind trade groups—trade associations, I should say. They don't have the guts to stand up and oppose this. They are hiding behind organizations.

Here is one of the organizations, and I am quoting Anna Ashton, vice president of government affairs at the U.S.-China Business Council. Here is what they have to say:

We long have said that national security should not be defined in a vague way.

"Vague way." We are not vague in this. We are very clear. And then she goes on to criticize it.

So what are we talking about here? We are talking about an effort to protect U.S. national security not just in the context of the pandemic but more

broadly. We have had corporations for more than a generation now offshoring work and business to China and other places. Because they are seeking cheaper production and labor costs, these companies have been moving production of manufactured goods overseas, often to China. When you move your supply chain overseas, you are at the mercy of the laws and regulations of the country you move to, and in this case, you are at the mercy of the Chinese Communist Party.

Now, this isn't a big problem when offshoring goes to allied or liberal democracies, allied or liberal democratic countries, but it does become a problem when the offshoring goes to foreign adversaries like China and Russia that don't play by the rules.

So how do we solve the problem? How do we ensure that the panic and the powerlessness that we all experienced way back in the spring of 2020 and beyond—how do we make sure that doesn't happen again? How do we make sure that the most powerful Nation in the world, the most powerful Nation in human history, is not at the mercy of the Chinese Communist Party or the Russian Federation or any other country—at their mercy not just generally but at their mercy for something as simple as personal protective equipment, gowns and gloves and masks? How do we make sure we are never in that predicament again?

Well, one of the things we need to do is have a process to screen outbound investment. We have had for the better part of 50 years a screen for inbound investment, OK? We have a committee that has done that since the midseventies. All we are doing here with this amendment is putting in place an outbound investment screen so that outbound investment screen will make sure that our national security interests are not compromised.

We don't want to create further dependency on supply chains that are located in the countries—where the country is a foreign adversary.

So this amendment 1853 is modeled after legislation that I authored a few years ago, the National Critical Capabilities Defense Act, where we have reintroduced a bipartisan bill with Senator CORNYN, the senior Senator from Texas.

I mentioned earlier that this is three Democrats and three Republicans on this amendment—Senator CORNYN, as I made reference to; Senator STABENOW, Democrat from Michigan; Senator RUBIO, Republican Senator from Florida; Senator KAINE, Democrat from Virginia; and Senator TILLIS, Republican Senator from North Carolina. They have all supported an amendment that would establish this process to screen outbound investments and the offshoring of critical supply chains to foreign adversaries like China and Russia to ensure the resiliency of critical U.S. supply chains.

It would require that companies disclose before—before—they offshore na-

tional critical capabilities to foreign adversary—foreign adversaries, plural. So it is a commonsense approach to deal with a problem that preexists the pandemic but came into sharp focus when we were totally at the mercy of the Chinese Communist Party.

The review process is designed to identify vulnerabilities and to provide a suite of recommendations to the President, and it emphasizes remedial action such as support to domestic industries, like increased research and development investment, utilization of manufacturing institutes, among others.

The proposal encourages supply chain diversity, and the bill is limited in scope, only covering foreign adversaries like China and Russia. It is limited in its purview. It looks only at national critical capacities.

The amendment establishes an inter-agency committee led by the U.S. Trade Representative to oversee the review process for capacities that are deemed "critical" to U.S. national security.

This committee would focus on outbound investment or offshoring of these critical capacities, supply chains, domestic production, and manufacturing to foreign adversaries. I would note the committee would not—would not—review outbound investments to allied countries or any country not on the affirmative list.

The amendment would also establish a process to conduct outgoing—I am sorry—ongoing evaluation of critical supply chains. In short, the amendment would ensure the United States can respond to the needs of our Nation and those who may call upon us in times of crisis.

But here is the problem: This commonsense, bipartisan amendment, in a town that doesn't do a lot of bipartisanship, is being opposed by corporate interests. Powerful corporate interests are opposed to this amendment and, in some cases, are actively working against it to shut it down.

There has been a whisper campaign by corporate lobbyists to kill this bipartisan amendment that protects our national security. They are lobbying against an amendment—against an amendment—that will ensure the United States has better visibility on supply chain vulnerabilities so we can respond to the needs of our Nation and those who call upon us in these times of crisis.

If a company wants to offshore semi-conductors to China, we need to know about it, and the President could block it if that activity is a risk to national security. Yet business interests like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the U.S.-China Business Council are organizing against this commonsense proposal.

And, as I mentioned earlier, these groups of big corporations are hiding behind their trade associations to do the work that they are doing. They are fearmongering, and they are spreading

misinformation. This effort is not surprising because often you have that in Washington. We have interests that come together, even in the face of something that would help our national security.

Our Nation and workers pay dearly when companies prioritize their bottom line over supply chain resiliency and security. When they offshore jobs and technology to foreign adversaries like China, our country pays for that, pays dearly.

I mentioned the U.S.-China Business Council and their opposition. The association for businesses—that is what this is—the association for businesses in China—businesses in China, and they are opposing.

So they have got a basic choice to make here, not just that organization but any organization in any company. It is a real simple choice. You can choose national security and a commonsense way to do that, in a bipartisan amendment, or you can just choose profits in places controlled by foreign adversaries. It is a real simple choice. This is not complicated. They will try to make it complicated, but it is not.

Let me start to address some of their arguments. I mentioned earlier that the industry says that covered products are defined in a “vague way”—a “vague way.” That is what they say.

That is not true. We provide specifics on personal protective equipment, medical equipment, goods that are critical to the electricity grid or disaster preparedness, and we expect a robust rulemaking process. Everyone knows that. When you pass a bill like this or a policy like this, rulemaking follows. We specifically and clearly state that rulemaking needs to provide specifics for firms to understand what and when—they need to disclose and when they need to disclose it.

We limit review exclusively to foreign adversaries like China and Russia. If a U.S. firm is offshoring critical capacities to a foreign adversary, the U.S. Government should know about it.

But again, that only applies to outbound investment to foreign adversaries. We are not talking about outbound investment to Germany. We are not talking about outbound investment to Canada or Australia. We are talking about China and Russia here.

So we took business comments, and we took edits from business groups around the country. We tried to ensure it was specific to threats while also providing flexibility for the administration to adapt and to adjust.

So what is Big Business really opposing? They are opposing better visibility on when they offshore these critical capacities to a, in this case, Chinese Communist Party, a Communist country, that happens to be a foreign adversary in so many areas of our bilateral relationship. They are opposing better visibility on engagement with a government that is involved in gross human rights abuses and forced labor and oppression of its people.

The old expression “Sunlight is the best disinfectant” applies here. Why would we allow a U.S. company to take an action that compromises our national security and disaster preparedness? So we engaged in good faith in taking reasonable comments from these big business associations. Businesses offshoring critical capacities to foreign adversaries should be everyone's concern, not just the concern of six Senators in the Senate and some others who have spoken in favor.

Big name-brand companies don't want their names attached to this effort. That is why they are hiding behind their trade associations. But I want to be clear with them and clear to those who are listening. We know who you are; we know what companies are behind this; and we know what you are doing.

I am going to continue to work to pass this amendment or, if it ends up in a bill form, we are going to pass it because we are going to take steps here in the U.S. Senate, in a bipartisan fashion, to protect U.S. national security in this fashion. We are not going away.

So if these business groups think they are making progress today, we are going to defeat you. So just get ready for it because we are going to defeat you.

Now, I will hold some comments that I was going to make about some others who are opposing this. I will limit my comments today.

I want to just conclude with this thought. A lot of Members of this body talk really tough about China. They act tough with China. They give a lot of speeches. You know, there is a lot of hot air about China. They go on television and talk about it, but then sometimes when it comes to taking on big interests, they cut and run. I would hope that those three Republican Senators aren't the only Senators on their side who are willing to stand up for this critical national security issue.

Again, it is a real simple choice. It is national security or getting profits at the mercy of a Chinese Communist Party. We are asking for a vote on this amendment.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New York.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1520

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Madam President, I rise to once again call for this entire body to have the opportunity to consider the Military Justice Improvement and Increasing Prevention Act, which would ensure people in the military who have been subjected to sexual assault and other serious crimes get the justice they deserve.

I rise on behalf of the supporters of this bill, including a bipartisan, filibuster-proof group of 65 Senators, major veterans service organizations, and the veterans they represent. Every day we delay a vote on this bill is another day that their voices are being silenced.

Our legislation makes the commonsense reform that our veterans and our

servicemembers have asked for. It takes a decision on whether to prosecute serious crimes out of the chain of command and moves it to independent, trained, military prosecutors. This will create a system that is free of bias and capable of fairly trying these complex crimes.

This legislation, as I mentioned, is supported by the Nation's major veterans service organizations. These organizations recognize that this reform would build a military justice system worthy of the service of our members—a system that delivers justice, consequences, and convictions.

This bill is supported by the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. Their CEO, Jeremy Butler said:

The status quo with our military chain of command's response to military sexual assault is not working and this continuing threat to our military requires this commonsense solution to protect our servicemembers.

It is supported by the American Legion, which recognizes that this legislation will “improv[e] the system by which the Department of Defense investigates and prosecutes reported cases of military sexual trauma so that it is on par with the civilian system.”

It is supported by Protect Our Defenders. Retired Col. Don Christensen, the president of Protect Our Defenders said:

Every year, generals come before Congress and tell Congress that sexual assault is a cancer in the force. This is a readiness issue. This is a force protection issue. This is an issue that drives out thousands of good men and women every year who want to serve. This [reform] will finally see the justice that our members deserve and the prevention they deserve.

It is supported by the Vietnam Veterans of America. In a letter of support for this legislation, national president John Rowan wrote:

After decades of hearing that the military will not tolerate military sexual assaults and that it has zero tolerance of such, the numbers continue to climb.

Vietnam Veterans of America believes it is time to make real change to the process if real action is to be taken in its attention to the victims and the violence. Fear of reporting the crime of sexual assault is a barrier in addressing the justice these victims deserve. Their legal counsel and defense counsel should be no less than a civilian receives in our court system.

This bill is supported by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, which accounts for more than 1.5 million veterans as members. It is supported by Common Defense. It is supported by SWAN, the Service Women's Action Network. It is supported by the Veterans Recovery Project. It is supported by the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence and the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

These are veterans. These are our constituents, our fellow Americans, and these are people who have put their lives on the line for this country and seen firsthand the way the current

military justice system fails our servicemembers. They know better than anyone else what change needs to be made, and they are asking to pass this bill.

Do not silence their voices. Let this vote come to the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Iowa.

Ms. ERNST. Madam President, I rise again today in support of my colleague in calling for consideration of the Military Justice Improvement and Increasing Prevention Act. This is an effort whose time has come for serious debate and consideration on the Senate floor.

For 8 years, the Senate Armed Services Committee, on which Senator GILLIBRAND and I sit, has worked on countless efforts to seek justice for victims of sexual assault, all within the chain of command. Many of these were good provisions pushed by myself and others to reduce the barriers in reporting sexual assaults. Provisions focused on both prevention and professionalization of military courts handling sexual assault cases and efforts to improve the culture and ensure all enlistees receive sexual assault prevention training before attendance at their initial training. This is just to name a few.

What has brought me here today supporting this effort with Senator GILLIBRAND and Senator GRASSLEY, with 64 cosponsors in the Senate, is that while these efforts were well-intentioned, our plague continues. That is not OK with me as a combat veteran, a former commander, and sexual assault survivor myself.

If our military is going to face the threats of the decades ahead, we will need a force that is free from the threats in its own ranks. As I mentioned, this legislation has 64 bipartisan cosponsors and more than 50 percent of committee members' support.

It is the right bill at the right time, and we must not delay any further. So I join with Senator GILLIBRAND in a call for consideration of this bill.

I yield back to the Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Republican leader, the Senate Armed Services Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 1520 and the Senate proceed to its consideration; that there be 2 hours of debate equally divided in the usual form; and that upon the use or yielding back of the time, the Senate vote on the bill with no intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. REED. Madam President.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Reserving my right to object. For the reasons I articulated on Monday, I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. ERNST. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MILITARY APPRECIATION MONTH

Ms. ERNST. Madam President, just 1 percent of the U.S. population serves in the defense of our great Nation. America owes an immeasurable debt of gratitude to this small number of citizens who give so much to protect our freedoms and our way of life.

May is Military Appreciation Month, so on behalf of the people of Iowa and me personally, I want to thank each and every one of the women and men of our Armed Forces and their families.

We may celebrate you in May, but we appreciate you every single day. You are the ones whom we call upon to defend our Nation from our foreign adversaries and rogue actors who intend to harm us. You are the ones we called upon when COVID-19 seeped into our borders and shut down America. You stood guard to ensure our way of life succeeds. Thank you for being the greatest fighting force on the face of the planet.

After 23 years of my own military service, with great pride, I now get to watch as my daughter soon embarks on her career as an Army officer.

Libby, thank you for your willingness to serve and the sacrifices you have committed to.

While serving in the military is one of the most rewarding experiences, it is not easy. As we approach Memorial Day, we must all take time to remember the servicemembers and their families who have paid the ultimate price, laying down their lives for our great Nation.

Iowa has lost 158 of our sons and daughters in Iraq and Afghanistan, 2 in Panama or Grenada, 7 in the first Persian Gulf war, and 867 in Vietnam. Our Korean and world wars numbers were in the thousands.

While I won't be able to individually honor all of these heroes, today I would like to echo a few names in remembrance of Iowans we lost in the defense of our Nation.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

GUNNERY SERGEANT JEFFREY E. BOHR

Madam President, Marine GySgt Jeffrey E. Bohr, Jr., is from the tiny farm town of Ossian. He was 39 years old when he was killed on April 10, 2003, after a 7-hour gun battle in front of a Baghdad, Iraq, mosque.

Gunnery Sergeant Bohr served a 20-year career as an Army Ranger and then a Marine. He was assigned to 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, Camp Pendleton, CA, at the time of his

death. He was the first Iowan killed by enemy fire in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and he was posthumously awarded the Silver Star.

Gunnery Sergeant Bohr left behind his wife Lori, who is also a native of Iowa.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT JAMES C. KEARNEY III

Madam President, Army SGT James C. Kearney III—I know him as Jamie. He was an Iowa National Guardsman from Emerson, which is 10 miles from where I grew up. I knew Jamie before he enlisted in the Iowa Army National Guard. He was very excited about his enlistment, and he told me about his excitement and how he felt that he had found a place that truly rewarded him.

He was 22 years old when he died on November 1, 2004, in Salerno, Afghanistan, from injuries he sustained when his convoy was attacked by enemy forces using rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire in Afghanistan.

Sergeant Kearney was assigned to 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry, in Glenwood, IA, at his death. He was posthumously promoted to the rank of sergeant and awarded a Bronze Star with a "V" device for valor. He was the first Iowan killed in Operation Enduring Freedom, and our community misses Jamie to this day.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

PETTY OFFICER 2ND CLASS JAIME S. JAENKE

Madam President, Navy PO2 Jaime Jaenke was a naval reservist and a native of Iowa Falls. She is beautiful, isn't she? She was 30 years old when she was killed on June 5, 2006, in Al Anbar Province, Iraq, when a roadside bomb struck the Humvee that she was riding in.

She was assigned to the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 25, based in Fort McCoy, WI, at her death. She was posthumously awarded the Navy-Marine Corps Commendation Medal with "V" for valor.

She left behind her daughter, Kayla. She was the first woman killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom from Iowa.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

LANCE CORPORAL ADAM FRANKLIN WOLF

Madam President, LCpl Adam Franklin Wolf is from Eldon. He was 25 years old when he was killed on June 20, 2014, in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, when a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated near his vehicle.

He was assigned to the 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force, from Camp Lejeune, NC.

He is Iowa's most recent fatality. His twin brother and family survive him.

HONORING GOLD STAR FAMILIES

Madam President, another group of strength and resiliency I want to acknowledge today is our Gold Star families. They are the ones left behind in battle and in war. We owe it to the heroes who gave their all to protect and care for their families and their communities.

To every Gold Star family, thank you. Thank you for the sacrifices you

have made and continue to make every day. I assure you, you are not alone or forgotten.

I would like to take just a brief moment of silence in honor of those we lost in combat or due to everlasting combat injuries.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). Without objection, it is so ordered.

S. 1260

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, we know that some of our biggest competitors around the world spend billions in propping up state-owned enterprises and investing in research and development. They have also gotten pretty good at taking our ideas, monetizing them, and using them to compete—and sometimes cheat—against American businesses while paying their workers less and giving those workers fewer protections and rights. China is often the worst offender.

Ohio workers know all too well what happens to their jobs and their communities when they are forced to compete with Chinese companies that break the rules, pay poverty wages, and are propped up by the government. We are working to change that this week.

I want the technologies that will drive the next generation of U.S. economic growth and manufacturing—from semiconductors to hydrogen buses to the next-generation jet engine—to be developed in America and to put people to work in good-paying jobs in our country.

This is something we should all agree on. It is what we are working to do with this comprehensive, bipartisan bill.

This package is packed with investment in research and development, technology, and high-tech domestic manufacturing that will again set us up to lead the world. It supports American manufacturing and innovation. It gives businesses the tools to compete. It supports American workers—the engine behind our success.

It includes my Build America, Buy America Act to strengthen our “Buy American” rules and ensure that American tax dollars go towards American-made products that create American jobs.

This provision is the result of bipartisan partnership. I would like to thank my colleague from my State, Senator PORTMAN, and also Senators PETERS and STABENOW from Michigan, Senator BALDWIN from Wisconsin, and Senator BRAUN from Indiana for their work.

Our legislation would apply “Buy American” rules to all taxpayer-funded

infrastructure and public works projects. When we ensure our tax dollars are spent on American products, these tax dollars go further in the economy. We employ more workers who spend on local businesses and lift up everyone.

When we say “Buy American,” we mean “Buy American”—not import a steel slab from China, make it into a pipe, and stamp on it “Made in America.” We need to make sure these rules are thorough, tough, and effective. That is exactly what this provision does.

This bill also gives our country tough new tools to crack down on China’s cheating.

Banking and Housing Committee Ranking Member TOOMEY and I worked together on an amendment to take on Chinese espionage against our economy. The amendment is the product of months of bipartisan negotiation. I thank Senator TOOMEY and his bipartisan staff.

The Presiding Officer, Senator OSSOFF, is a new member of that committee and has contributed greatly on this and other projects we have done.

Our plan directly confronts action by the Chinese Government and Chinese firms that hurt American workers and companies by stealing their valuable intellectual property. These measures were developed by Senator VAN HOLLEN. They require mandatory imposition of powerful new sanctions on Chinese actors who steal U.S. trade secrets.

The United States remains a global center for research, development, and innovation, and for years, people have been stealing our ideas. China is the worst offender; we know that. The Chinese Government and the companies it props up engage in systematic and growing espionage against our businesses and our workers. The theft of trade secrets costs the United States as much as \$540 billion every year.

Our plan would give the President new tools to go after Chinese actors who target our country with cyber attacks. Americans have all seen over the past few weeks how serious cyber attacks are, how they can disrupt our entire economy. We need strong tools to punish these attackers and the countries that finance and support them.

Sanctions are just one new tool this package includes to increase American competitiveness.

We will build on the success of our bipartisan Revitalize American Manufacturing and Innovation Act to create more manufacturing innovation hubs around the country.

Back in 2014, I worked with Republican Senator ROY BLUNT and the Obama administration to pass the Revitalize American Manufacturing and Innovation Act. This landmark bill created a national network of advanced manufacturing hubs. It was one of the biggest steps we had taken as a country in a long time to make our manufacturing more competitive.

America Makes in Youngstown—the first of its kind, the first in this program—started as a pilot program back 9 years ago. It became the first hub in that network.

I thank my colleagues for their work on this. I thank especially two members of my staff who are on the floor today, Abigail Duggan and Megan Malara, for the work they have done. I thank my colleagues for moving forward on this very important act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

ETHIOPIA

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, over the weekend, the State Department—that is, our State Department—imposed visa restrictions on several Ethiopian and Eritrean Government officials. They claim these officials have not done enough to end the hostilities in the Tigray area.

Now, the Tigray area is in the northern part of Ethiopia, and it is an area that is one of the very old parts of that continent.

First, we need to be clear. Everyone, especially the Ethiopian Government, wants nothing more than a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the Tigray, but this action puts the terrorist organization TPLF—that is a terrorist organization—on equal status with the Ethiopian Government. Now, that is unacceptable, and it is wrong. It is outrageous that we have them in the same issue as if they are somehow equals.

Let me say something to be 100 percent clear, to make sure no one can misunderstand this, and that is that humanitarian atrocities are wrong and have no place in our world. I am proud that Prime Minister Abiy of Ethiopia has clearly stated that any atrocities are not condoned by the government and those responsible will be held accountable. That is going to happen.

To truly understand this issue and why putting the Ethiopian Government on equal footing with the TPLF is so offensive and downright wrong, you need to understand how we got here. Indulge with me in just a little bit of history.

Now, I know the changes Ethiopia has seen over the last decade. Since 2005, I have visited Ethiopia 19 different times, engaging and developing relationships with Prime Ministers, Cabinet Ministers, legislators, businesspeople, aid workers, and everyone else in between. I say this to show that I know Ethiopia probably better than anyone else in this Chamber. But more than that, I know its history.

Ethiopia is the oldest independent country in all of Africa but one that is newly democratic. That comes with problems, and we understand that.

The current controversy and why we are here today started back in the 1970s with a man named Mengistu. From 1974 to 1991, Mengistu was the leader of the Communist Derg. That is the Communist Party in Ethiopia. This was the

controlling party at the time. It is a Communist Party. They ran Ethiopia. It was a terrible time for Ethiopia. That was during one of the worst famines they ever had on that continent or actually anywhere. It killed over a million people. That might be the most significant famine in history in terms of deaths.

Then, in 1991, the Communists were booted out. At the time that this took place, one person who was responsible for the getting rid of the Derg Communists and the Communist threat in Ethiopia was a guy named Meles. He was a member of the Tigrayan political party.

Now, we got to know him quite well. He is the one who got communism out of that part of the world. He ended up as Prime Minister. This is really the election that a lot of people don't like, and they forget about the fact that he was the Prime Minister who actually got rid of the Communists in Ethiopia.

So he became the Prime Minister. He started to build democracy. He died in 2012. I got to know him quite well during his lifetime, and I saw the progress that he made and the advances that they made.

He was then replaced by another Prime Minister whose name is Hailemariam. Now he became Prime Minister, and he continued to push for democracy. Hailemariam worked diligently to improve things. Under his tenure, Ethiopia established the Independent Ethiopian Human Rights Committee that reported on violence and human rights problems, and it was tremendously successful. They didn't just establish it; they acted on it. They came out with a report and acted on it to hold perpetrators accountable and to make the improvements that were being made at that time. Our relationship wasn't just government-to-government; it was brother-to-brother.

In February of 2017, Prime Minister Hailemariam suggested that since the provinces were all fighting at one time—and at that time, there were nine provinces in Ethiopia. Each province had a Governor. We suggested on the phone with the Members of the Senate here in Washington and the House prayer group in the House of Representatives that what we ought to do is follow the recommendation of Eisenhower. We are talking about former General Eisenhower, President Eisenhower. He was a great, great President of the United States. This was right after World War II. He said—this is a quote. I am quoting Eisenhower now. He said:

The problems of this world are so great that we will never resolve the problems until we learn to sit down and pray together.

So we decided, let's all get the Governors, the Prime Minister, Members of the House, Members of the Senate, and the rest all together, and we will pray with them. We did this. In fact, we had five Senators with me at that time, and we went over. The problem was, only two of the Governors showed up, out of nine, so it didn't work.

Eight months later, we had occasion to be back there, and we put together the same thing, but we talked to them to let them know—we talked to the Governors at that time, the nine Governors who were in Ethiopia. So we got them and explained what it was all about. The Governors who had been fighting with each other and had been fighting with Hailemariam all prayed together, and we were joined in prayer by 18 Members of the U.S. House of Representatives. We were joined with them by phone, and the Prime Minister and all of us, Members of the Senate and others who were there, we all rejoiced and embraced each other.

That was really significant. The nine Governors had never been together before. They didn't like each other. They never had been in the same room before. But most of the people didn't live in cities, and that made this effort that much more difficult. The vast majority of people who live there are in rural communities, and that made this widespread change in development a longer and more difficult path.

In Ethiopia, the tribal factions also played a great role. If you go from province to province, that used to be from tribe to tribe, and they historically have not gotten along until this time. So it made it more difficult because of the factions and all of that, but it worked. We unified them together, and that was unlike anything that has ever happened.

One of the Governors who was there at the time was named Dr. Abiy. You might remember that name because he is now the Prime Minister of Ethiopia. I have often said that Dr. Abiy is arguably the most educated, the smartest guy I have seen in that position in—of the entire continent of Africa. He is just a tremendous person.

We got them together at a leaders breakfast. We put something together where he told the story of his journey in faith in Jesus. This is Dr. Abiy.

We met a year later, where we prayed and talked about how to unify the country in peace, not conflict. It is from these meetings that I know Abiy is committed to democracy and committed to the future of Ethiopia. He is showing that with his actions as well.

Abiy was elected Prime Minister in 2018 after active and spirited protests against the existing ruling party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, which had run the country for almost 30 years. Abiy was elected by a country looking for fresh leadership. He immediately took steps to create positive change. He promised unity and reconciliation, and against all odds, he delivered. He passed liberal democratic reforms, and he freed political prisoners and journalists. Abiy even did what was once believed impossible: He negotiated a peace treaty with Eritrea after decades of long cold war and was recognized with a Nobel Peace Prize for his work. He was the recipient of a Nobel Peace Prize for all the wonderful work he had done. That

was in Africa. It was a leading operation.

So how does all this play into the situation before us today? The Ethiopian People's Democratic Front—the previous ruling party—is dominated by people from Tigray, the area up north that we talked about before, one of the regional provinces.

When Abiy set up a new governing body and focused on governing for the whole of Ethiopia, and not just a few politically powerful regions, the TPLF wasn't happy. That is the terrorist group. They felt like they were losing the outsized influence that they held for decades and decades.

They also weren't happy about the peace deal with Eritrea, the TPLF, who were ruling Ethiopia in the 1990s when the bitter Eritrea-Ethiopian conflict was going on. Decades later, they still feel aggrieved and didn't want peace. The result, they started acting out.

In 2019, they started to refuse to participate in the new government and the new ruling party. They expressed their frustration in more overt and destabilizing ways. They held their own regional parliamentary elections in September during the height of the coronavirus pandemic instead of agreeing with the other provinces and the Prime Minister that they should be postponed because of the pandemic.

The militia affiliated with the TPLF—that is the terrorist group that has been designated by the Ethiopian Parliament as a terrorist group—attacked an Ethiopian army base in Mekelle on November 4 and stole weapons there.

Let me restate this plainly. A regional party, TPLF, attacked a government military base. The government rightfully responded, and the regional terrorist group is well equipped and has been fighting back and continuing the conflict for a long period of time now.

That is what is going on right now. That is the situation we find ourselves in, and that is why it is astounding to me that our government continues to treat this situation with both sides being equal when clearly they are not. One side is the democratically elected government, and the other side is a disgruntled faction that is reacting with violence because they are no longer in power. It is a terrorist group.

And again, the Ethiopian Government has been clear that they do not condone any of the reported atrocities, and they will hold anyone who commits atrocities accountable. We, the United States, need to continue to engage Ethiopia and try to understand how what we are seeing today is a product years in the making. It is not a simple matter of two aggrieved parties. It is Prime Minister Abiy working to protect a unified, peaceful, stable Ethiopia.

We should be talking to him about how we can help him restore peace, not slapping punitive sanctions on his government—an action that does nothing but demonstrate that we can't or won't

appreciate the history and the regional differences that lead to this situation.

And I want to close by speaking to Prime Minister Abiy and our friends in Ethiopia directly: Brother, I am with you. Those of us who understand the history of what you are facing and what you are working to support, we are with you, Prime Minister Abiy.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KELLY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

COVID-19 ORIGIN ACT OF 2021

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, we are here tonight for a very simple reason with a very simple proposition—that the American people deserve to know about the origins of COVID-19. They deserve to know how this terrible pandemic that has ravaged the globe and our country, how it got started and what China's role was in starting it.

Now, we have seen a parade of government officials speculate about the origins in one place or another. And there is increasing speculation and, indeed, increasing numbers of statements from government officials saying that perhaps this virus originated in a Chinese lab, in the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

Well, I think it is time that the American people got to decide for themselves. It is time that they actually got to see the evidence that the U.S. Government has collected on this issue, and that is exactly what the measure that we are introducing here tonight would do. It would make available to the American people the evidence that the U.S. Government has about the origins of this terrible virus and this terrible pandemic.

I am proud to be joined in this effort by Senator BRAUN, and I know that he would like to make a few remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. BRAUN. Thank you, Senator HAWLEY.

This was an easy one. Over the weekend, the Wall Street Journal gave us some news. We have had a cascade of others weighing in now, where this is maybe an epiphany that some have had that we need to look further into the roots.

Look at what our country has gone through. It has been a year and a quarter, and it has ravaged not only the United States but the world. And why, for the sake of simple transparency, wouldn't we want to get to the root cause of it?

The World Health Organization made an attempt at it. It was not effective. It looked to me like it was apologizing for what might have occurred in China.

President Biden finally has said that we need to put more light and attention on this. So thank goodness, for whatever the reason, we are going to get to the bottom of it. When it has caused this much grief across our country and across the world, it needs to be done.

The intelligence communities in our own country are storing information that needs to be revealed to the American public. It needs to be revealed to anyone who can look at it to make sense out of what has happened.

So our bill is very simple.

Since I have been in the Senate, whether it is weighing in on issues of healthcare, national security, COVID-19—who disagrees with transparency, the sunshine that reveals everything?

I was in a committee hearing. And when you get the two individuals whom we have relied on mostly in this whole journey, Dr. Fauci and Dr. Collins, first acknowledging that transparency is paramount, and that, yes, we should declassify this information, and when we have listened to them help navigate us through this tricky journey, and they tell us earlier today, "Give us the information," I think that is why here, this evening, this will go through with unanimous consent, because it makes sense.

And wherever it leads us, we should be happy that we finally might get to the bottom of this—whatever it reveals. We don't know where it will take us. It is relying on what is most important—on the information we housed. Let's make sure the American public can see it and that any group that wants to analyze what happened can, including the rest of the world.

So it was easy for me to get onboard, to get behind something so simple that says nothing more than if we got the information, let's show it. Let's not hide behind it. And when you get individuals like Dr. Fauci, Dr. Collins, the director now of the WHO, something is afoot, and we need to find out.

I am glad that we are here this evening punctuating this so that we get it done.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, the American people can be trusted with the truth. More than that, the American people deserve the truth.

They deserve to know the true origins of this virus. They deserve to be able to evaluate the evidence for themselves. They deserve it. Their government owes it to them, and it is time to act.

And the American people deserve something else. They deserve to have this government hold accountable that nation which started this virus, whose lies about this virus turned it into a global pandemic, whose lies about this virus prevented our country and many others from being able to address it effectively in time. Of course, I am talking about China. The American people deserve to have all of the evidence and

deserve to have this government's full effort and the effort of our allies and partners in holding accountable China for what it has done, not just to this country but to the world, and to make sure that something like this never happens again.

So, Mr. President, I ask now unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 1867, which is at desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1867) to require the Director of National Intelligence to declassify information relating to the origin of COVID-19, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. HAWLEY. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 1867) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 1867

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "COVID-19 Origin Act of 2021".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The Department of State released a fact sheet on January 15, 2021, about the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) which stated the following:

(A) "The U.S. government has reason to believe that several researchers inside the WIV became sick in autumn 2019, before the first identified case of the outbreak, with symptoms consistent with both COVID-19 and common seasonal illnesses."

(B) "WIV researchers conducted experiments involving RaTG13, the bat coronavirus identified by the WIV in January 2020 as its closest sample to SARS-CoV-2."

(C) "Despite the WIV presenting itself as a civilian institution, the United States has determined that the WIV has collaborated on publications and secret projects with China's military."

(2) Former Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Robert Redfield, stated in March 2021 that, "the most likely etiology of this pathogen in Wuhan was from a laboratory" and noted that, "[i]t is not unusual for respiratory pathogens that are being worked on in a laboratory to infect the laboratory worker."

(3) Director-General of the World Health Organization Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus acknowledged in March 2021 that the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) may have originated in a laboratory and said this hypothesis "requires further investigation, potentially with additional missions involving specialist experts."

SEC. 3. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) identifying the origin of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is critical for preventing a similar pandemic from occurring in the future;